



**Missouri Department of Conservation**  
**Projects, Issues and Programs in Shannon, Carter and**  
**Ripley Counties**



**Current Conversations**

**The MDC: A Landowner's Perspective**

**Special Points  
of Interest**

**The MDC: A Land-  
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**Louis H. Jones**

**Lt. Col USAF, Retired**

When I was in fourth grade, my father bought a rather large piece of land in Shannon County – well it was large for folks who had lived all their lives on a 50 by100 foot lot in the St Louis suburbs. For “city slickers” like us, this was a great adventure. We spent as much time in the Ozarks as we could, and enjoyed touring local attractions, canoeing, fishing and hiking. But most of all, we just enjoyed spending time on our property.

After a year or so we realized our timber just didn't look like a forest should look. It was crowded, over cut, poorly shaped and had a lot of dead or dying trees. It needed professional attention. Dad was persuaded by a local logger to cut everything above 16 inches and let the rest grow. Not a good decision, but that appeared to be the prevailing wisdom at the time. What we had left was a lot of bad timber, tops everywhere and many smaller trees fighting for a spot in the sun.

After that misadventure, my dad made the decision to seek real professional help in managing the timber we had. He established a working relationship with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) in Van Buren. This was the best decision he ever made. The first recommendation from the local forester was to plant pine seedlings in three idle pastures. As time passed the MDC foresters changed, but their support did not. MDC folks arranged for thinning the pines that had now grown

to pole size. They also assisted in arranging for periodic and selective timber cuttings on the rest of the property.

I moved on to an Air Force career and only saw “the Farm” on rare occasions. I retired about the same time my father passed away so it then came to me to manage the family assets. About this time, there was a statewide reorganization and our MDC support was transferred to the Eminence Office. There were new faces, but the enthusiasm and commitment had not waned. When I saw the place for the first time in many years, to my amazement, the property for the first time looked like a healthy forest. There had been a major shift in timber harvesting philosophy. Both large and smaller trees were cut with the goal of optimizing growth and eliminating trees that had poor potential for growth or supporting wildlife. But most impressive, was the pine seedlings had grown from match stick size to well over 18 inches in diameter. All the planning had paid off. MDC had worked magic.

As I said, this all started when I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. I am now 62, and this year marks the 52nd year of association with the MDC. Looking back at my own career, I have had the pleasure of worked closely with the Department of Defense, NASA, Department of Transportation and the FAA. Many of these agencies were top notch organizations to work with, but none had more

enthusiasm for their professions than MDC. And none surpassed MDC's professionalism.

My family is now dispersed from Texas to North Carolina. As a result, we recently made the family decision to sell the property. It was not an easy decision as it had become important in the lives of four generations of our family. It was the rational thing to do, however.

As a final note, I would like to put into perspective the contributions MDC made. Proceeds from the property sale (based primarily on the existing timber stand) fully funded the retirement for two family members, went toward upgrading a horse ranch on the east coast, and greatly lessened the cost impact of a lengthy nursing home stay of my mother. This does not even include the significant income my parents derived from timber sales over the years. All this was made possible from a \$2000 investment and the advice and commitment of some of the finest professionals I have ever known. The folks at the MDC made a significant and positive impact on the lives of all my family. It has been a personal pleasure and honor to have been associated with them. Thanks MDC.

## **Private Lands**

### **Don Foerster**

#### **Private Land Conservationist**

The first time I met Homer and Steward Kennon, was during my first month of work as a Private Lands Conservationist. Brad McKee was introducing me to MDC's cooperators in Ripley County. Brad said, "Homer and Steward are good people and their EQIP contract has the potential to provide some very good wildlife habitat." I learned over the next few years that Homer and Steward are special people with a love for the land that turned potential into an extraordinary habitat.

The Kennons were first introduced to Missouri Department of Conservation through the efforts of Conservation Agent Darrin Killian who stopped to check their deer tags and share some information about deer habitat. The agent also got the Kennons started on habitat development through the MDC seed program. Steward and Homer also sought the help of Private Lands Conservationist Brad McKee who enrolled them in the EQIP program. MDC has been working with them on habitat development and management since that first contact.

Since our cooperation began the Kennons have developed 8 wildlife watering facilities, planted 16 acres of permanent forest openings, to green

## **Special People- Great Project**

browse, restored a 55 acre glade/woodland complex and did timber stand improvement on 10 acres. They also started restoring 170 acres of pine woodland. The Kennons plant about 50 acres of annual grain each year. Through these efforts their 1200 plus acre farm has now become one of the best examples of habitat management in Ripley county.

I asked Steward and Homer which part of the habitat development that they feel helped the most. Homer said with a grin, "The alfalfa green browse seems to attract the most deer and turkey. If a light happens to shine over the alfalfa plot it shines like a Christmas tree." Steward replied, "The food plots and watering holes help but I like the glade the best. I find deer and turkey in there most any time. It just looks great." When asked if they would do all this again? "Absolutely" was the instantaneous reply of both men.

As I have worked with Steward and Homer over the years I have noticed that they have an unusually strong conservation ethic. There is nothing wasted or abused. They even utilized the timber removed from their glade. Steward uses the wood in his shop where he makes furniture and sometimes coffins. I asked them about their ethic.

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Homer answered “We are just stewards of the land, holding it for the next generation. I want to leave it in better condition than I found it.” Steward said, “If you look close enough you will find prints of seven generations of Kennons on this place from dad’s granddad Thomas A. Kennon to my grandson Rivers Kennon. How can I do anything but my best? I want the latest information I can find, that is why we contacted MDC.” Working with people like the Kennons answers the question —Can conservation on private land be sustainable from one generation to the next?

## Recycling Award Given to Carden-Jessen

Melanie Carden-Jessen, director of Twin Pines Conservation Education Center was recently presented with a state recycling award by Gov. Blunt due to her efforts to recycle just about everything at Twin Pines.

The award hangs on the wall as you enter Twin Pines and is a visible reminder of all the systems for recycling that Melanie has set in place. Not only cans and cardboard are recycled but even toilet paper cores, packing peanuts and other unusual items get a new lease on life at the facility. Many of these items are used in conjunction with the many classes offered at Twin Pines. Congratulations to her for putting such a program in place and for all the employees successful efforts to reduce landfills.

## O & E

## Backyard Birding in Spring

Pat Holloway

Spring officially begins on March 20, 2009, with the arrival of the Vernal Equinox or Spring Solstice in the northern hemisphere. This is the day when daytime and nighttime are equal in length. The center of the sun is directly above Earth’s equator. After this day, the sun will follow a higher and higher path through the sky, with the days growing longer and longer, until it reaches it highest point in the sky on the Summer Solstice.

With the arrival of spring, many songbirds come back to Missouri. The Eastern bluebird, Missouri’s state bird, arrives at nesting sites in March. In 1927 the Eastern bluebird was designated by the Missouri Legislature as our state bird. New York also recognizes the Eastern bluebird as the state bird. In the past twenty years Eastern bluebirds have increased in number because people have build nesting boxes and monitored the boxes to other species do not move into the boxes. You can attract bluebirds to your backyard by placing a bluebird box on a lone post at a height of 4 to 5 feet. Instructions and a building pattern for bluebird nesting boxes can be found at the Missouri Department of Conservation web site ([www.missouriconservation.org](http://www.missouriconservation.org)) or by requesting the free publications. You don’t need to feed Eastern bluebirds, they find plenty of grasshoppers, beetles

and flying insects in the grasslands they love.

Attracting birds to your backyard can be the start of a popular family activity, birding. With some practice you can be successful at identifying birds that visit your backyard. Judging the size of the bird with a quick look can help identify a specific bird. Compare the bird to the size of a commonly recognized bird such as a crow, robin, or sparrow. Of course a pair of binoculars and a guidebook are two important tools that will help you identify birds. Focus on specific parts of the bird and learn to identify birds by their distinct silhouette, outline, or the behavior in flight. The wings of turkey vultures are shaped into a V and are a bit unsteady in flight. Pay attention to the shape of the beak and feathers. For example the tail of a barn swallow can provide a visual clue to its identity. Or the shape of the beak of a cardinal will give you a clue that this bird eats seeds. Watch the behavior, you will see that a robin hops on the ground. Another distinction birds have is their calls. The American robin has a three part, high pitched, call that sounds a bit like “cheer-up, cheerily cheerily, cheer-up”. Use sounds that are familiar to you like the caw of a crow and ask your children

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to identify which bird makes the sound. Find ways to connect with nature.

*Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you."*

*Frank Lloyd Wright*



## **Twin Pines Schedule**

March 4-6:

### **Smoky Bear Wants You!**

March 11-12; 9:30 to 10:30 AM

### **Little Stinker's Storytime**

March 21 : 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM

### **Hunter Education Certification**

June 28: 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM

### **Family Fishing Day**

Starting the first Sunday in March, at 2 PM, a new film will be shown at Twin Pines on some area of conservation followed by a family oriented activity. We even provide popcorn.

## **PROTECTION**

## **Permit Restructuring**

### **Permit Restructuring Changes Approved 12-19-08**

#### **Changes Effective July 1, 2009**

Eliminated the existing youth deer and turkey hunting permit and the youth antlerless permit, while establishing a 50% discounted price for resident and nonresident youth on deer, turkey and trout permits.

Approved allowing resident youth under the age of 16 to trap without a permit.

Set a minimum age of 6 for obtaining deer and turkey permits.

Approved allowing nonresident youth to hunt during the 2-day youth spring turkey season beginning in 2010.

Approved allowing nonresident college and technical school students to purchase resident permits.

Made the hunter-education and age requirements for mentors consistent.

Established a new light goose conservation order permit for the 2010 light goose conservation order (residents \$5, nonresidents \$40).

Eliminated nonresident landowner reduced-price deer and turkey hunting permits.

### **Non-resident hunter and angler permit changes effective 7-1-2009**

Nonresident Fishing, from \$40 to \$42

Nonresident Furbearer Hunting/Trapping, from \$120 to \$130

Nonresident Small Game Hunting, from \$75 to \$80

Nonresident Spring Turkey, from \$175 to \$190

Nonresident Fall Turkey, from \$105 to \$110

Nonresident Firearms Any-Deer Hunting, from \$175 to \$225

Nonresident Firearms Antlerless Deer Hunting from \$7 to \$25

Nonresident Archer's Hunting, from \$150 to \$225

Nonresident Managed Deer Hunting, from \$175 to \$225

Nonresident Archery Antlerless Deer Hunting, from \$7 to \$25

**The establishment of a simple, landowner-friendly way to verify landownership for those receiving free landowner permits has been delayed until Spring 2010.**

## Forestry

**Steve Paes**

**Resource Forester**

## A Window In Time

One goal of the Department of Conservation is the restoration of Missouri's natural communities. In the past, many of these natural communities supported a wide variety of plant species and abundant wildlife resources which are now rare. These include forested wetlands, prairies, and woodlands.

As a forester for MDC, the challenge of restoration is knowing what is to be the end result. If we do not know the goal, how do we get there or know when we reach it? One tool has been the writings of the first Europeans to pass through the Ozarks. These include the journals of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, who made a trip through the Ozarks in 1818-1819, and notes of the first surveyors from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

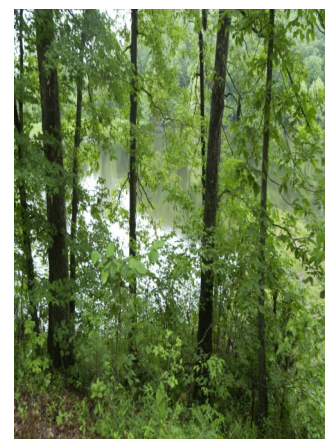
Much of what Schoolcraft observed has changed including abundant bear and elk, rivers with no gravel bars, and forests of large trees and an open "park like" understory of grasses. What were to become Ripley, Carter and Shannon counties was dominated by pine forests with trees far enough apart that a wagon could be driven through the woods. The river and creek bottoms had cane thickets and bottomland hardwoods.

Today pine is still present but the area it covers is greatly diminished. The trees are much younger and grow closer together. It would be hard to find places a horse drawn wagon could travel through the woods. Much of the bottomlands have been cleared for pastures and cane thickets are found only as scattered remnants.

Glimpses of the presettlement Ozarks can also be seen in the few properties and stands of trees that have had minimal disturbance. Foresters refer to areas that have never had trees harvested as virgin forest. There are probably less than 100 acres of virgin forest in all of the Ozarks. Recently, a private property in Ripley County has been discovered that still has some virgin forest. Other stands on the property have not been disturbed since before the Civil War. Today it is hard to find a large black cherry in our forests, or one that is tall and straight. This property has one over 100 feet tall and over 60 feet to the first limb. Other trees are 120 feet tall, 30-50 feet taller than most forests in the Ozarks. The oldest known white oaks in the state are on this property, some are almost 400 years old and still healthy. In comparison to the rest of the Ozarks, a 200 year old tree is considered very old and most

are under 100. The amount of merchantable timber growing here is 3-4 times the present day average. Portions have an astounding 34,000 board feet/acre, 10 times our average. There are some trees and habitats on this property that can not be found elsewhere and I consider it to be a window in time, a hint of what the forests of the Ozarks used to be like.

If these conditions were what was normal and found everywhere, it is easy to see why people wanted to settle in the Ozarks. Hopefully there are other areas like this yet to be found and the few that are left will be preserved and left undisturbed.



**Wildlife**

**Ryan Houf**  
**Conservation Agent**

**Turkey Hunting**

**At Peck Ranch**

When I think of April, I think of turkey hunting. Apparently many other people think of turkey hunting as being synonymous with Peck Ranch Conservation Area. Based on our collection of data from the last 5 years of spring turkey hunting inside the fenced portion of Peck Ranch Conservation Area, over 1,100 people have tried outsmarting the cunning bird on its home ground of 10,486 acres located in Carter County.

A free daily hunting permit is required to hunt inside the fenced portion of Peck Ranch Conservation Area along with your statewide firearms turkey hunting permit. Hunters can obtain the free permit outside the entrance gate of the refuge. We ask that the hunter fill out and return the free daily hunting permit in order for us to better manage the hunting grounds.

The following table is a compilation of information from the last 5 years of daily permits that hunters have filled out while turkey hunting inside Peck Ranch Refuge.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Hunters</b>	<b>#Birds</b>			<b>#Resident</b>	
		<b>Harvested</b>	<b>Mature</b>	<b>Juvenile</b>	<b>Hunters</b>	<b>Hunters</b>
<b>2004</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>126</b>

Peck Ranch hunters are harvesting an average of 17 turkeys during a 3 week season with a success rate of 7%. On average 12 of the 17 turkeys harvested are mature birds. Sixty percent of the hunters utilizing Peck Ranch are nonresidents mostly from Arkansas, Illinois, Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi. Total harvest is equally split between residents and nonresidents. As the season progresses the amount of hunters declines. We average 110 people hunting during the first week of the season. The second week decreases to 80 people. However, by the third week we see a 65% decrease to an average of 38 hunters. Due to poor hatches and poor acorn production we have seen a decrease in turkey populations and harvest numbers in the last couple of years and do not expect to see better numbers for 2009.

Over the last 5 years we have also noted a decline in hunters during the Youth Spring Turkey Season. We have dropped from 20 hunters on average to 8 hunters in 2008. With 500 to 1,300 acres per hunter, Peck Ranch is a great place to take a youth who is just starting to turkey hunt.

We temporarily close roads throughout the refuge to provide a better hunting experience by creating a walk in turkey hunting atmosphere. Maps of the closed roads will be placed in the map box located at the entrance of the refuge. We also offer folks 3 disabled hunting blinds on a first come first served basis. Feel free to contact Peck Ranch Office at (573) 323-4249 for more information.

Even though turkey numbers are down, Peck Ranch offers some of the best scenic views in the Ozarks. With rolling topography ranging from glades to open woodlands to mature forests, Peck Ranch turkey hunting is bound to create a hunting memory you'll never forget.



## Fishing

**Dave Woods**

**Fisheries Management Biologist**

## Walleye Reward Tagging

In the last issue of *Conservation Currents*, an article about walleye fishing briefly discusses ongoing management efforts of fisheries biologists to enhance the quality of walleye fishing on the Current River. This year, Current River walleye are getting more attention from the Missouri Department of Conservation. A small population of naturally reproducing walleye exists in the lower Current River, however the conservation department has been supplementing that population by periodically stocking thousands of 1-2" fingerlings for close to a decade. This has been an effort to provide even more angling opportunities for walleye enthusiasts.

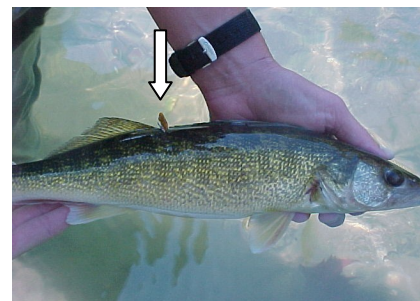
In the past, the Missouri Department of Conservation has tagged a few walleye with angler reward tags. Starting early in 2009, the fisheries staff will be tagging an additional 500 walleye with reward tags in an effort to better understand the walleye population in the Current River. These tags can be worth \$10, \$20, or \$100 if caught and returned to MDC fisheries personnel. When returned, angler reward tags provide important information to fisheries biologists about the movement, growth, and harvest of walleye, and are an excellent example of the Missouri Department of Conservation and local anglers working together to improve the fishery resources of the Current River.

The tags will be placed behind the spiny dorsal fin of the walleye (see picture) and can easily be removed by clipping the wire at skin level. If an angler catches a walleye with a reward tag, he or she should remove it and mail it to the address printed on the tag. Along with the tag, the angler should provide their name, address, and phone number to receive their reward. Other important information that should be included with the tag is the specific location of where the fish was caught, the date of the catch, the length of the fish, and whether the fish was kept or released. When MDC fisheries biologists receive the tag, they will send a return letter with some history of the fish, how much the tag was worth, and when the angler can expect to receive their reward.

In conjunction with reward tagging, fisheries staff are attempting to better evaluate the success of stocked walleye in the Current River. Most walleye stocked in the past decade have been marked with a chemical called oxytetracycline (OTC) before being put in the river. OTC shows up in the ear bone (otolith) of the fish under ultraviolet light. By reading the growth rings of otoliths, and checking for OTC marks, biologists can determine the age of the fish and whether or not it was stocked by MDC. In order to obtain otoliths from wall-

eye, MDC is asking for help from local walleye anglers. If an angler catches a legal size walleye, one 18" or more, and decides to keep it, saving the head, freezing it, and turning it into a conservation agent or management biologist will aid in the evaluation of walleye stocking on the Current River. Similar to the tagging study, anglers should write their name, location of the catch, and length of the fish on a piece of paper and turn it in with the head.

Similar walleye reward tagging studies are being conducted on the Black River and Eleven Point Rivers. By combining information received from all three of these rivers, biologists hope to better understand just how walleye move within and between the rivers in the Black River system, and how much angling pressure walleye receive. Walleye in these rivers get big and get big fast. With the help of anglers on the Current River, MDC biologists will be able to implement the best management practices to provide sustainable walleye fishing on our rivers for many years to come.



# MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

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## We're on the Web!

[www.missouriconservation.org](http://www.missouriconservation.org)

### MDC Mission

- To protect and manage the fish, forest, and wildlife resources of the state.
- To serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management activities.
- To provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about fish, forest, and wildlife resources.

### Mission of this Newsletter

The mission of this newsletter is to share current information about conservation projects, issues, and program and to develop working relationships with the citizens of Shannon, Carter and Ripley Counties.

### Share Your Thoughts

If there are any subjects you would like to see in the *Conservation Currents* please contact any employee listed below, or if you have any questions pertaining to the Wildlife Code please contact the Conservation Agent assigned to your county. County assignments and phone numbers are listed below.

### Operation Game Thief and Operation Forest Arson

Sponsored by the Conservation Federation of Missouri, the Missouri Department of Conservation and the U.S. Forest Service.

## CONTACT OFFICES AND NAMES

If you have a question about any of the following topics, here are your contact professionals

### Shannon Co. Field Office

Eminence 573/226-3616

#### Forestry

Gary Gognat 573/226-3616

Terry Thompson 573/226-3616

Mike Bill 573/226-3616

#### Private Land Management

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#### Conservation Agents

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#### Wildlife

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Rhonda Rimer 417/256-7161

#### Fisheries

Dave Woods 417/256-7161

#### Conservation Education

Stephanie Rust 417/256-7161

#### Outdoor Skills

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#### Wildlife

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#### Fisheries

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#### Conservation Education

Pat Holloway 573/840-9788

#### Outdoor Skills

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Steve Paes 573/996-2557

#### Private Land Management

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Darren Killian 573/996-5984

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